



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE VINCENT J. CANDELORA
EIGHTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

405 SEA HILL ROAD
NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT 06471

HOME: (203) 481-4463
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700
TOLL FREE: (1800) 842-1423
FAX: (860) 240-0207
E-MAIL: Vincent.Candelora@housegop.ct.gov

RANKING MEMBER
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE

MEMBER
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE
REGULATIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Testimony of
State Representative Vincent J. Candelora
In Support of Senate Bill 279
An Act Concerning Foreign Languages Taught in the Public Schools.
Before the Education Committee

March 1, 2010

Good afternoon Chairmen Gaffey and Fleishmann, Ranking Members Caligiuri and Giuliano, and Members of the Education Committee. I am here to testify on Raised Bill 279, *An Act Concerning Foreign Languages Taught in the Public Schools*.

On behalf of the House Republican Caucus, I would like to thank the Education Committee for raising this concept, as it would continue to show support for students who partake in online coursework offered to them. As you are already aware, Raised Bill 279 will expand state law to include middle school students in grades six, seven, or eight, to be eligible for enrollment in online coursework related to world languages, and upon receiving a passing grade on the course exam, are eligible for up to four education credits.

This bill has a similar connection to a proposal offered by the House Republicans to expand the course list of classes offered by Connecticut's Virtual Learning program. By expanding the number of courses offered to our students, we can take a big step forward towards bridging the achievement gap by providing a world-class education and training through a wide array of online educational courses and technological resources. A sampling of courses that we can consider adding to the existing course list could include: Advanced Placement courses, SAT prep courses, college preparatory courses, courses aimed at students who are in need of remedial assistance before they leave for college, expanded science, technology and math courses, and providing a bigger variety of foreign language courses.

The best thing about expanding this area of our student curriculum is that it could reach students of all corners of our state- from rural districts that may not have access to teachers who may teach advanced placement courses, to our urban areas who may have students that want to learn more about agriculture and marine biology, as well as every student who is considering an advanced degree, and may be looking for easy access to SAT prep courses. The Education Committee's decision to offer Bill 279 is a great way to make education more accessible to all of our students, and I hope the committee will consider including our proposals to expand coursework within the Connecticut Virtual Learning program.

Virtual learning has developed into a mature, legitimate education venue, and the time has come for the state to treat it as such. So much of the work that's done in the business world these days is through online communication. Yet, our schools don't come close to maximizing the potential of technology to better prepare our students for entry into the workforce. In the House Republican proposal, we set a goal to make virtual learning 10% of the high school curriculum within five years. Maybe this is realistic, and maybe it's not, but we need to have something to shoot for.

In addition to the educational benefits, virtual learning is less expensive than traditional classroom learning. I hope that we can begin thinking about ways to either shift resources or make new investments in virtual learning, because over the long haul, it will save us money. And, when it comes to technology, we shouldn't stop at online classes. We also proposed a pilot program to construct new schools with virtual libraries. This would save on school construction costs because less space would be needed for housing books. And, we can explore the possibility and cost-effectiveness of issuing e-readers (Nook or Kindle, for example) to every student in those schools.

The House Republican Caucus supports the concepts in this bill. And we stand ready to work with members of the Committee to expand virtual learning opportunities and advance the use of technology in schools generally. Once again, thank you for your time and consideration in regards to SB 279. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully Yours,

Vincent Candelora
State Representative